

Listed building consent for extension

AT 11-27 Eagle Walk, Central Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes

FOR CMK Britel Nominees No 1 And 2 Ltd

Update 31st January 2013

Correction to Officer Report

The list of relevant policies with the report omitted to include local plan policy HE4: Extension or Alteration of a Listed Building. This policy formed part of the consideration of the application and its omission in the list is purely a typographical error.

Additional Information provided

Since the application was originally made the applicant has submitted an updated Heritage Statement and Commercial Justification Statement. In response to comments from the conservation officer and after the publication of the Panel agenda the applicant has provided further information regarding the marketing of the units over the last 5 years.

In their current configuration there are a number of issues which affect the Eagle Walk block and ensure it does not appeal to the wider retail market. These issues include the lack of any depth, the block is tired and needs upgrading, the frontages are hidden behind the colonnade thus reducing impact and visibility and hence appeal to retailers, the dual frontage to Middleton Hall and Eagle Walk presents an issue for retailers who do not wish to have a dual entrance as it is difficult to manage from a security perspective and this is exacerbated by a lack of depth causing problems for retailers with store design and layout.

The income generated from the block has reduced significantly in the last 5 years and previous occupiers of the units have performed poorly from this location and have consequently relocated elsewhere in the centre to more prominent, well configured units.

The feedback from potential retailers is always very negative for this block with depth, configuration and frontage proving a major stumbling block.

To date the Eagle Walk units have only been able to attract temporary occupiers with minimum investment and job opportunities. More recently a number of these retailers are failing and looking to vacate the centre or relocate.

There is currently serious interest from several retailers to take the units; however, the retailers remain uncommitted to the centre due to the issues already highlighted with these units and the interest has been expressly stated on the basis that the landlord invests capital into the block and extends the frontage to infill the colonnade.

Response from Conservation

The Conservation officer recognises that the additional information does at least start to add evidence for the need for the proposed works. Investment in this block of units is fully supported and it is to the benefit of the shopping building that these units remain viable and attract quality tenants to improve the ambience of Middleton Hall. It is the Conservation officer's view that the evidence submitted to date fails to convince that the viability of the units rests on the infilling of the colonnades. Harm arises from the proposed infilling of the colonnade and although there would clearly be a counterweighing public benefit it appears that much of this benefit could be achieved through implementing the remainder of the measures (i.e. without infilling the colonnade) and the harm to the listed building be avoided.

Recommendation

Taking into account the additional information provided by the applicant including the historic problems with these units and the more recent interest, the response from the conservation officer and also recent approvals for infilling of the colonnade at John Lewis and the planning approval for the works currently proposed it is considered that whilst the proposal would result in harm to the listed building this harm would be less than substantial and would be outweighed by the benefits of the increased viability of the units. It is therefore recommended that consent be granted subject to the conditions listed within the officer report.